

Media Advisory

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For Immediate Release

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Celebrate America's Best Idea – National Public Lands

Tucson, AZ - On Saturday, September 29, volunteers across the nation will celebrate National Public Lands Day, the nation's largest hands-on volunteer effort to improve and enhance the public lands Americans enjoy.

Ironwood Forest National Monument and Saguaro National Park:

7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Where – Meet at the Red Hills Visitor Center of Saguaro National Park.

What – Buffelgrass removal along Manville Road. Removal of buffelgrass, an invasive non-native plant that threatens the entire Sonoran Desert, will benefit both Ironwood Forest National Monument and Saguaro National Park.

No experience is necessary. Everyone can help pull, dig and bag up buffelgrass. This project is recommended for volunteers 16 years and older.

Registration – Please sign up in advance at lahsha@ironwoodforest.org or call 520-628-2092.

Supported by - Saguaro National Park; Bureau of Land Management; Tucson Clean and Beautiful; Friends of Saguaro National Park; Friends of Ironwood Forest; Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center; National Parks Conservation Association; Pima County Natural Resources, Parks, and Recreation; Sonoran Desert Weedwackers; Tucson Water, Bureau of Reclamation; Arizona Native Plant Society; Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, Tucson Audubon Society, Town of Marana.

Saguaro National Park and Ironwood Forest National Monument in Tucson, Arizona plan to participate in National Public Lands Day for a third consecutive year. This year a record number of organizations are joining together to promote volunteer participation and public awareness of invasive buffelgrass.

According to Lahsha Brown, the Executive Director of Friends of Ironwood Forest, this invasive African weed is threatening to destroy the delicate balance of the park's desert ecosystem.

Buffelgrass outcompetes the native plants for space, nutrients, and water. In addition, it is fire-adapted and our native plants are not. With its drought tolerance, prolific seed production, and capacity to spread fire, buffelgrass has the potential to turn our parks with their iconic Saguaro, Paloverde, and Ironwoods, into bleak grassland savannas. More information about buffelgrass is at buffelgrass.org.

National Public Lands Day provides Saguaro National Park and Ironwood National Forest with vital manpower in the effort toward buffelgrass eradication. **Volunteers are still needed and people are encouraged to sign up in advance, although not required.**

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